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## **Fitness and Flexibility: The Role of Exercise in PD Management**

### **Exercise is Important!**

- Research shows exercise may have a protective effect in the brain, slowing the degeneration of brain cells
- Regular exercise helps to maintain functional skills of movement
- Exercise is an active way of coping with Parkinson's. Establishing early exercise habits is an important component of overall management

### **What types of exercise should I consider when planning my program?**

- Flexibility (stretching) exercises minimize effects of stiffness and rigidity, and are particularly important for the trunk and spinal muscles
- Aerobic (conditioning) exercises help preserve endurance/activity tolerance
- Posture exercises help keep the body in good alignment
- Balance exercises help to keep skills sharp and reduce fall risk
- Strengthening exercises counteract effects of disuse... Use it or lose it!

### **Exercise Guidelines**

- Perform simple stretches and posture exercises daily
- Follow a varied routine incorporating other components (strength, balance) several times per week
- Aim for aerobic exercise (such as walking, biking, swimming) at least 3 days a week for a minimum of 20 minutes
- Keep intensity at a level that feels "somewhat hard" for you
- Consider joining an exercise class or group. Classes promote follow through and a trained instructor to give clear guidelines or modifications
- Try exercise videos or home exercise equipment if it is difficult to get out
- Music can enhance performance by providing rhythm to coordinate movement

### **Resources for Exercise Follow-through**

Many of these are available through Park Nicollet Health Stores at [www.parknicollet.com](http://www.parknicollet.com)

- Fitness Counts*- National Parkinson Foundation ([www.parkinson.org](http://www.parkinson.org)) FREE
- Motivating Moves for People with Parkinson's* DVD to order ([www.pdf.org](http://www.pdf.org))
- Parkinson's and the Art of Moving* by John Argue (Book and video/DVD available to order ([www.parkinsonsexercise.com](http://www.parkinsonsexercise.com)))
- Walk Aerobics for Seniors* DVD ([www.lesliesansonevideos.com](http://www.lesliesansonevideos.com))
- Yoga for the Rest of Us* DVD/video ([www.publicvideostore.org](http://www.publicvideostore.org)) (*many are available through Park Nicollet Retail*)

### **Involving Your Team**

- Check with your physician if you have health concerns that affect your ability to exercise
- Seek a physical therapy referral for help in planning your exercise program

*Struthers Parkinson's Center – Parkinson's FOCUS: Finding Options for Care, Understanding and Support*

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